

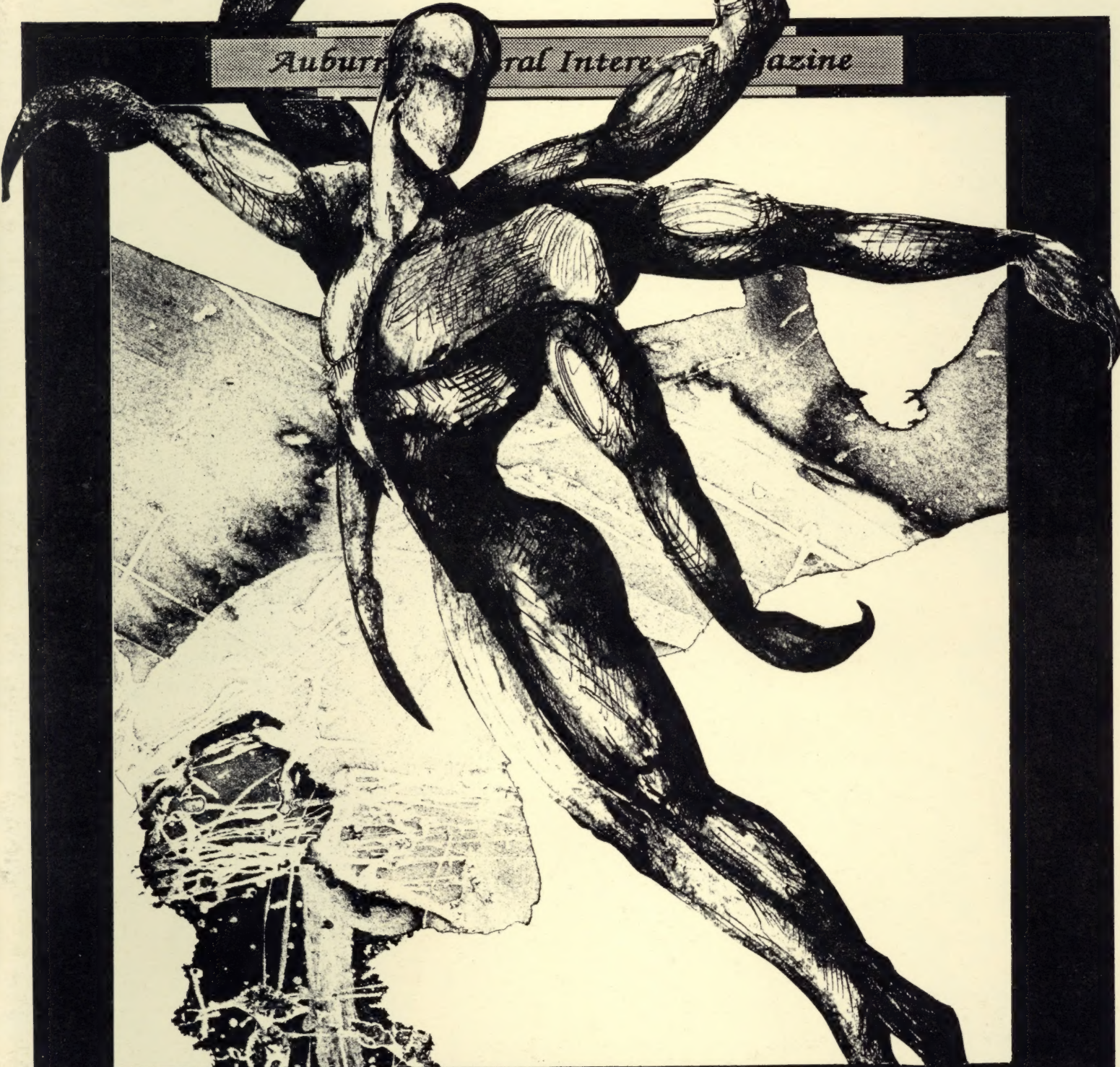
Volume 20

Spring 1994

Issue 2

# The Circle

Auburn General Interest Magazine



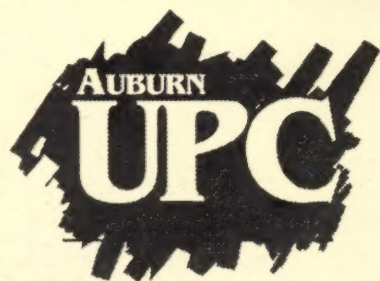


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# The Circle

Auburn's General Interest Magazine

The Auburn Circle, financed by advertising and student activity fees, serves as a forum for the writers and artists within the university community. It aims to appeal to a diverse audience by providing a variety of features and investigative journalism, short stories, poetry, art and photography. *The Circle* is published three times a year - fall, winter, and spring - with an average distribution of 4,000 copies. The views expressed throughout the issue are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the advertising companies, the *Circle* staff, the publisher (the Board of Student Communications), or Auburn University, its administration, student body and Board of Trustees.

## Colophon

This issue of *The Auburn Circle* was printed on 70-pound flat Matte paper by University Printing of Auburn, Alabama. The journalism and fiction typeface is 9-point New Century Schoolbook. Poetry is 10-point Monaco.



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*The Circle* accepts works from students, staff and alumni of Auburn University. Prose, poetry, essays and articles should be typed or legibly hand-written. Submissions on computer disks are acceptable. *The Circle* has access to IBM and MacIntosh computers. All artwork submitted remains in *The Circle* office and is photographed to reduce risk of damage. We accommodate artwork of any size and shape. Slide submissions are accepted. Collections of related works by artist or photographers are accepted for our Gallery section. All submission become property of *The Auburn Circle* on a one-time printing basis, with reserved rights for possible reprinting of material at a later date.

*The Circle* is located in the Publication's Suite, basement of Foy Union, down the outside steps from the War Eagle cafeteria.

For more information, call 844-4122, or write:

*The Auburn Circle*  
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## Editor's Note

Because of all the attention I have received in recent issues of **The Plainsman**, I am guessing that the majority of you are probably sick of hearing from and about me. So, I will keep it short this time.

Basically, I would just like to state again how much I have enjoyed being editor this year. Yes, it was challenging, but who wants a boring job like SGA president? (Just joking, Pat.)

Anyway, I have appreciated all the positive comments and suggestions **The Circle** has received, and with the continued support of the Auburn Family, only the best of **The Auburn Circle** is yet to come.

Wynne Johnson  
*Auburn Circle* Editor

## Letters to the Editor

Editor, *Circle Magazine*,

I think you deserve to know that the 20th anniversary edition of *The Circle* looks incredible. That is a personal opinion, given with genuine respect for you and your staff's hard work. I have no idea how the editorial staff of *The Plainsman* will review it, but as far as I'm concerned (which I realize doesn't mean much in the grand scheme of things), it is a beautiful magazine full of interesting articles and features and vivid artwork. I am more than proud to show this to my friends and family as a product of Auburn University students.

I hope you are able to revel in a pride you should definitely have for and from this edition of *The Circle*. Congratulations!

Respectfully,  
Jan Clifford  
*Plainsman* Business Manager

Editor, *Circle Magazine*,

I recently visited Auburn University and will be attending next year. During my visit I came across your literary magazine. I was so excited. I'm currently a senior at Lassiter High School in Marietta, Ga. My high school puts out a literary magazine entitled *Areté* once a year. I am on the staff and it has been a wonderful and enjoyable experience for me.

I was wondering if you could possibly send me some information on how to get involved with your magazine or with other literature and arts events.

The issue that I happened to see was Fall 1993. I fell in love immediately with the layout and the type of selections that were included. You don't seem to exclude anything or anyone. You leave room for complaints and current views on student issues.

I would greatly appreciate any further information you might have to set me on the correct path next year.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
Danielle Berchin  
(a future War Eagle)

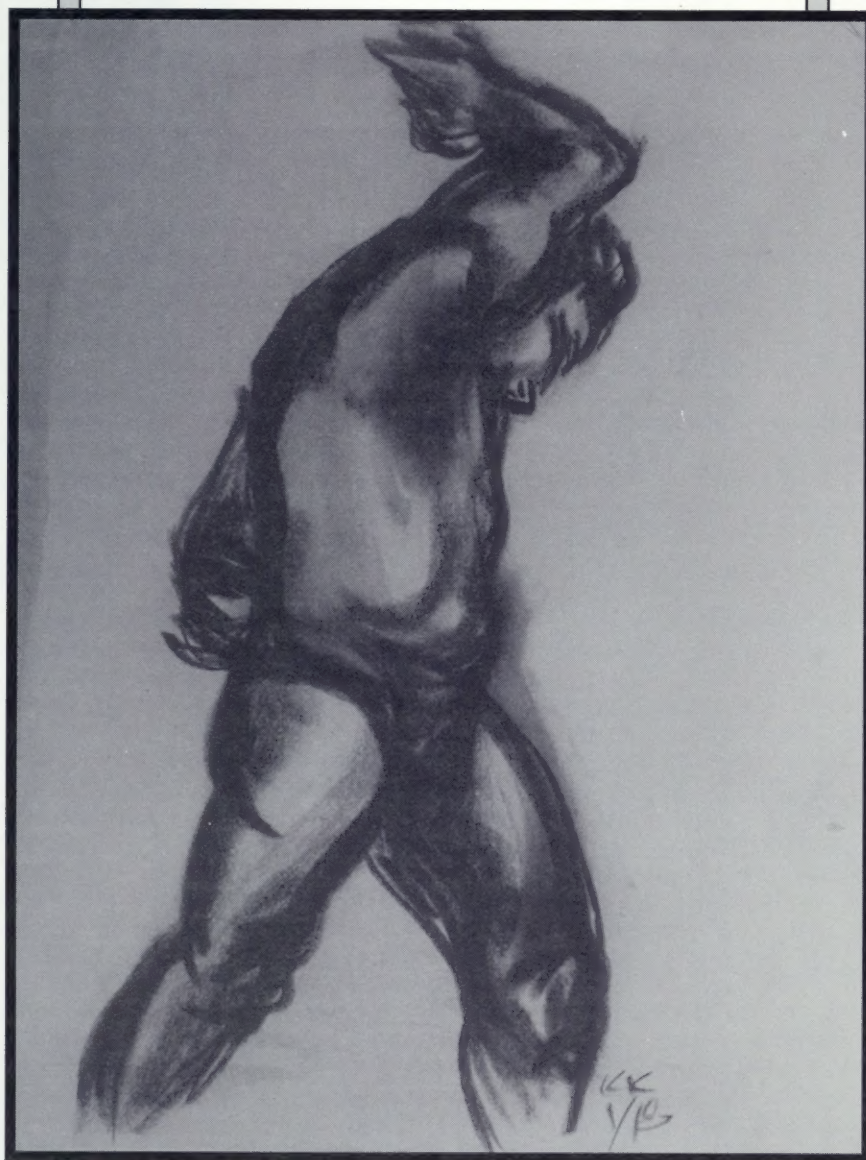
Danielle,

It is easy to get involved with **The Auburn Circle**. You may either call the **Circle** office (844-4122) and express your interest to one of the staff members (preferably the editor) or simply come down to the Publications Suite in the basement of Foy Union (where the **Circle** office is located) and fill out a staff application form.

As for literature and arts events on campus, a student has several options to pursue. The theatre department has regular auditions for the various plays and productions performed on campus. The schools of architecture, art, and design have frequent art shows and lectures, as well as Fine Arts Week, held each spring quarter, in order to get the whole campus involved.

If literature is more your cup of tea, spend an evening at a poetry reading sponsored by Sigma Tau Delta, the English honor society. These are announced periodically. Of course, one of the best ways to further an interest in literature is to become involved with **The Circle**!





*Untitled*  
charcoal on newsprint  
Karen Kimble



# An Island of One's Own

Karen Parr

**I**t was Lila who suggested we break into the abandoned house on the island. She called it "squatters rights" — said that if we took up residence long enough, it would be ours.

It was unusually hot that summer, so hot that a breeze ran through maybe twice a day, shaking the long grass by the river, then returning no more.

The heat created a stillness, a silence that heightened the faintest sounds and motions. One could hear a car rumbling far down the gravel road or a heron cawing across the channel.

Maybe it was the stillness, the inaction that animated Lila more than usual. She was clear hues of cream, auburn, and violet against a landscape dulled by a blurring haze of humidity. Her gestures were swift, impatient.

Lila went to the community college that summer and worked some nights. I held a day job and lived alone at my parent's lakehouse. Lila visited on her off days. She loved the island, the houses, the idea of ownership.

She wanted to be an architect.

She came to visit some evenings, wearing the heat of the day. Her auburn hair curled at the temples from humidity. Her creamy, tan skin was polished by a slight moisture, unlike its powdery buff in winter.

She was a frame of long bones and muscles that tightened when she bent at the waist or the elbow or the knee, as if she was folding up like shiny cartops in the sun, deflecting all light.

We broke in the second week of summer. We walked up the hill past the houses like any other day. Some stretched their white columns way above our heads, some perched jauntily on the bluffs above the water, some blared each different color for roof, siding and trim. Then there was Lila's cottage.

The stone cottage was hers long before the day we broke in, long before she was old enough to understand property value or building structure or landscaping.

The stones were tan and orange and maroon, each rock hewn flat and pressed carefully into the other so that not a crack remained. There were several high windows and a roof made of hundreds of small, round shingles. The screened-in porch faced the river, built on stilts that reached to the ground below.

She claimed the cottage as a child, when she would visit the island with my family for the weekend.

As children, we took over the screened porch, left unlocked long ago by the one who left it for the last time. Lila played with

miniature cars or train sets. I brought my dolls along and we consolidated the two.

The evening eventually came, dragging the last bit of daylight across each thin wire in the screen. Then we trudged home.

Something always kept us from entering the house as children. But the summer before we became adults, it was the only thought buzzing in minds otherwise dulled by heat.

We broke into the house with a library card. Lila used the trick as a teenager. Her mother told her to go to the library after school while she worked. Lila would get bored and walked back to her house, wedging the card under the lock and slipping it upwards with a quick thrust.

The cottage was invisible from the road, concealed by lush vegetation.

We walked up the gravel driveway, buried ankle-deep in leaves and sticks that crunched with each step. The air here was thicker and stiller than anywhere else on the island. It made one feel like a small insect trapped in an upturned glass, left to suffocate.

Lila tried to hold a flashlight with one hand while twisting off vines with the other. Thorns caught her pale cotton dress, stretching the material until it popped free of the grasping hands and coiled back around her calves.

The resistance seemed to annoy her. A strand of hair fell in front of her lips, where it rose and fell before the stream of her quickened breath.

"I don't remember it being this hard to reach," she complained.

"The brush has gotten worse,"

I said.

We jumped up the embankment to the first step of the porch. Lila brushed past me with the card and repeated the motion so familiar to her as a youth.

The quick flick of her wrist unleashed more than dust from the furniture covered with white sheets. It changed summer. Lila no longer came to visit as early on her days off from work.

Sometimes at dusk I would walk up the road to the top of the hill and look down to where the cottage hid. Lila was a dark outline against the feebly sparkling water. She would stand on the dock for a long time, as still as a heron watching for fish.

The hardwood panelling of the cottage walls sucked the last remnants of daylight into the darkness. For this reason, Lila always kept a flashlight in the cottage.

The dust penetrated so that sneezing accompanied any pro-





longed stay. Lila opened the windows during her visits to air out the structure.

The front room was spacious, with a long couch lining the wall, a tiny smokestand and a coffee table. Behind it was a kitchen with a low, white sink, a stove and an ancient refrigerator.

Of the two bedrooms, only one was furnished. It contained a large bed covered with a white bedspread and a dresser which harbored musty odds and ends — old cigarette cases, pens, sewing needles, buttons, brochures from forgotten vacations, postcards, and photos.

Lila removed the drawers to the front room. Some afternoons she sat on the porch examining the contents, reading the inscriptions on the postcards, digging deeper into the piles of papers.

This went on for many weeks. Lila came to my house after she went to the cottage. She would talk of house designs she worked on during class. Then she would talk of "her house."

She sat with her feet apart, elbows propped on her knees, hands clasped. Her thin face angled to her sharp chin, which she always pushed forward when she was excited about a topic.

"All I have to do is save \$200 each month after I graduate, then I can buy the cottage," she said. "I'll open up a firm up north and work for a few years to make money, but I'll come back to the island."

She often spoke of architecture and would wave her thin hands. "You know that house propped up on the bank of the river for God and everyone to see?" she asked. "The people who built it don't understand the river."

"The river was here first. Give it ten or fifteen years and it'll wash that house right into the channel."

"My house will stay just the way it is. I may put in a bigger window in front and plant wildflowers over the front yard, but that house won't be changed."

The week during finals Lila was too busy to visit. That was the same week something happened at the cottage.

I didn't go to the cottage while Lila was gone, so I had no idea. I stayed at my own well-lit house, with its modern sheet rock walls, its french doors and neatly carved niches designed for showing off prized possessions.

Lila's house stayed in darkness awaiting her return.

She dropped her books in the hallway after the last day of summer quarter. "Let's go visit my house," she said.

We forced our legs up the hill, Lila swinging her arms with the motion of her thin dress. We reached the top and sur-

veyed the sweep of land.

The dock across the road was its usual long empty stretch of wooden planks. The cottage was marked by a deep green.

But a misplaced blur of blue and white was by the road. I knew those colors well.

Lila stopped. She stiffened her back into an even more upright position. I watched her eyelids squeeze the purple into two narrow crescents fixed on the sign.

"No," she said.

Again and again she screamed as she ran, "No, no, no!" Her yellow dress whipped about maddeningly with her body as she raced to the house. I ran after her.

She didn't wait for the driveway; she lept over a ditch and scrambled through the growth, falling once, then leaping up. Her dress caught briefly on each bramble before it was ripped away.

I halted to catch my breath at the driveway. The sign was clear now, blue and white bars with a red hot air balloon in the corner. It read, "Lakeside Realty."

**The evening eventually came, dragging the last bit of daylight across each thin wire in the screen.**

When I reached Lila, she was crumpled on the porch. Her entire body was slumped against the front door, its only firmness in the hands. With these she held onto the doorknob.

Before her screams were deafening. Now only weak sobs drifted from the bowed head of the trembling figure.

I touched my hand to her side. Her breath jerked in her rib cage. It felt like a toy unwinding.

"Lila," I said softly. Long minutes passed.

Finally the muffled reply, "It's mine."

She became quiet again. For a long time we sat in silence. Then the crickets of late August began their droning chant.

When Lila raised her head, she revealed eyes puffed up like a 6-year-old's on the first day of school. Her lips were swollen shiny red.

She just stared. Then she hit the door with one final blow of her fist.

"They put a new lock on the door, damn them," she said.

As night fell, the conversation came out in occasional droplets, like small doses of hope given to a dying man.

I said nobody would buy it, it was too run down. She said they would, they'd change it; by the time she could buy it, it'd be changed.

The night air was inky blue dark when she rose slowly to her feet. She let out a long sigh. I got up and looked into her eyes, then held both her delicate, limp hands.

Her eyes were fixed on the river. "Someday," she said.

We didn't walk home together. I know she stood on the dock that night for a long time. She never came back to my house. By morning, her car was gone.

I didn't see Lila again that summer. In September she left for the state university to study architecture. I went back to my own out-of-state college.

December was so cold I longed for the summer heat. I drove up to the island during the school break, the car's heater choking furiously.

Dusk changed the air on the island into lashing ice-tongues. I drove past my house and up the hill. Then I pulled over when I saw the familiar dock across the road from the cottage.

There was a thin dark figure standing at the very tip of the wooden planks. I started to walk down the hill, then broke into a run.

"Lila!" I called. The trees fanned out around me as I passed. The cold air stung deep inside as it filled my lungs.

I had almost reached the cottage, when the figure moved.

It bent downwards as if to dive into the icy waters. It raised its head, lifted its legs to its chest and sprung off the dock.

Broad wings spread out and the lanky body raised into the air. It was the largest heron I'd ever seen.

I watched it fly across the channel, occasionally crying as it flew. Then I saw it no more.

When I turned I saw the cottage clearly. What had been summer greenery was now skeletal vines of winter. The house seemed naked, its shutters still closed, its driveway still covered in leaves.

The "for sale" sign stood crooked, its colors washed into paler patinas of the original hues.

I stood in the street and my stomach began to tingle. I began to shake and suddenly a pealing laugh broke forth from my lips.

I laughed at the weakness of the sign, at the people who didn't buy the house.

I laughed because someday Lila would storm into a real estate office and say she'd come to buy a house.

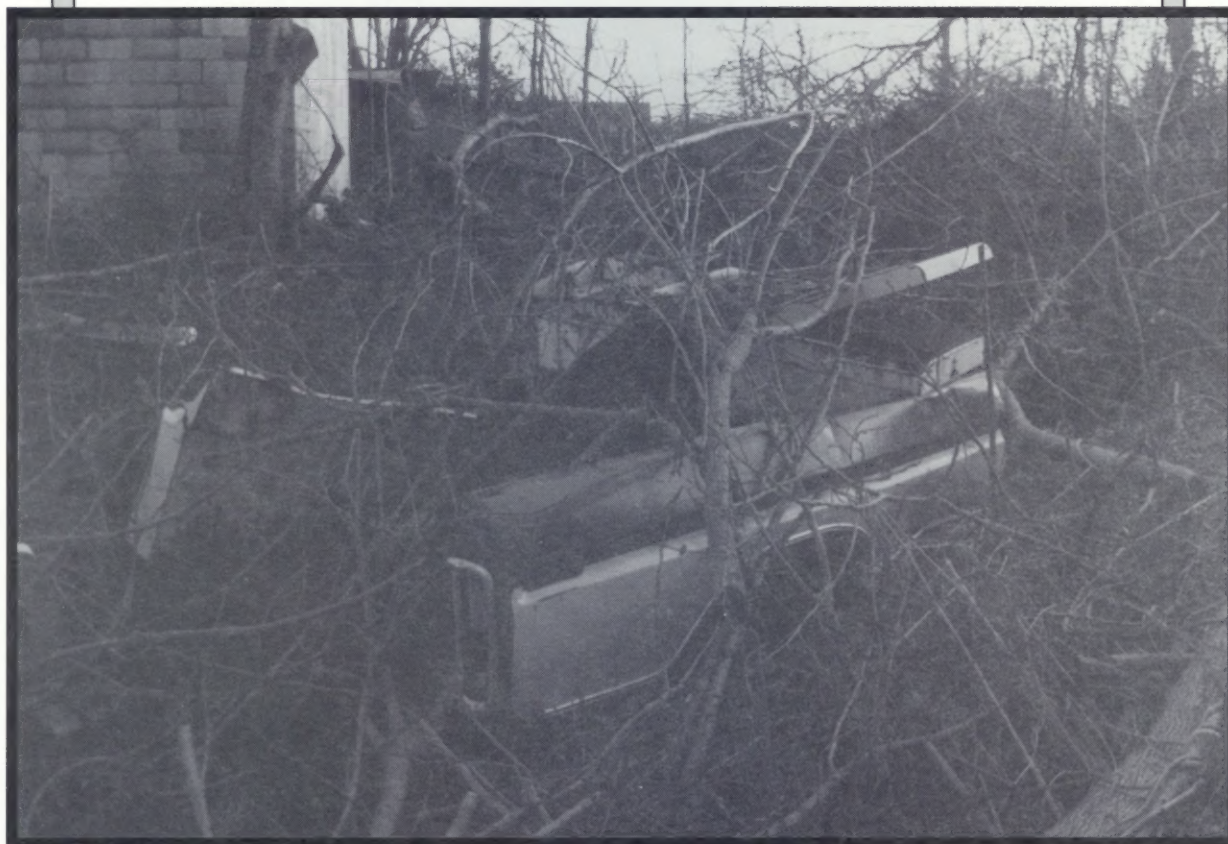
They'd ask her for her income and if she had a husband and she'd tell them all to go to hell, say that she was buying her house that very day, then lay down the fattest check they'd seen in months.

I laughed even more at how I'd tease her for years to come when she lived fortified by the stones and the wildflowers and the river.

I laughed until I cried because this house belonged to Lila.







*Untitled*  
Ashley Moody



# To Eloisa

Gretchen Eckroate

Woman-

No longer shrouded  
by the unman  
that betrayed  
with unman vows of passion.

Now

Speaker of the Untruth,  
(Once your Redeemer),  
has raped you of your  
redemption.

Trapped  
are you now by  
Devotion.

HIS?

Worn  
is the quill that speaks of  
Passion. Lacking  
are the pages of your salvation!

And  
BLOODY  
are  
your  
fingers...  
that scratch  
and stain  
these walls

NOW

christened with  
scarlet drops  
of desperation.

Woman of the New-Light -

**SCREAM!**

I thought I heard

you

want

to.

written in reference to *The Letters of Abelard and Heloisa*



# A Crisis in Alabama

Liz Humphrey

**T**here is a crisis in Alabama and we have an opportunity to rise to the occasion and eliminate the inequities and inadequacies in our schools. We have no lack of information about the problems in public education in Alabama today. It is no secret that one million adults did not finish high school and half that number are illiterate. It is no secret that ninety-percent of the prison inmates in Alabama are high school dropouts. And it is no secret that those products of the Alabama public school system find themselves insufficiently prepared for the rigorous academic environment of a college or university.

There are two elements lurking at the root of our public education crisis in Alabama: money and accountability. In 1991-92 Alabama spent \$3,632 per student on average. The Southeastern average was \$5,114—a discrepancy of \$1,482 per child. In local funding for education Alabama ranked 49th among all states. Alabama has one computer for every 26.4 students, ranking us 47th among the states. One-hundred and thirty Alabama schools have no librarian. We have 617 school buildings that are more than 50 years old. We have nearly 1,500 school buses that are at least 15 years old, and those buses have unshielded gasoline tanks.

The second element, accountability, has deprived our children of a quality education for far too long. The only requirements for a high school diploma in Alabama are scoring a "D" in core subjects and passing the high school exit exam (based on an eighth grade level). No one is held accountable for whether or not the student can read or write. No one is held accountable for those students that suffer in college due to a lack of preparation in communication and written skills. And no one is held accountable for those high school graduates in Alabama that cannot even fill out a basic job application.

A recent Southern Regional Education Board study predicts that by the year 2000, two-thirds of the 300,000 new jobs created in Alabama will require training beyond high school. No state in the South is presently more poorly positioned to obtain that kind of work force.

How can we heal the ills of our education system in Alabama? Judge Gene Reese has a prescription and the Alabama First Plan for Academic Excellence that has exactly what the Judge ordered. On April 1, 1993, Judge Reese ruled the Alabama education system unconstitutional. This ruling mandated a remedy order which was presented to the court on October 1, 1993. The remedy order outlined the components of an adequate and equitable school system in Alabama. The litigant group developed such a remedy

outline and all defendants approved the proposed order. A hearing on the objections was held on October 21, 1993 at which Judge Reese announced his intention to set September 30, 1994 as the deadline for state lawmakers to enact and fund comprehensive education reform.

A diverse group of Alabama citizens, appointed last spring by the Governor, developed a plan called the Alabama First Plan for Academic Excellence which is currently being debated by the Alabama Legislature during its regular session. The Alabama First Plan addresses every issue of Judge Reese's order as well as other concerns of Alabama citizens. The plan calls for equitable funding, school infrastructure improvements, more money into the classroom, reduced class sizes, increased teacher salaries and much more. The fundamental element of the plan is the establishment of a school system that is performance-based. The notion of

**The notion of a performance-based school system is quite simple - children should be able to perform required tasks in order to move from one grade level to another.**

a performance-based school system is quite simple—children should be able to perform required academic tasks in order to move from one grade level to another. Performance-based education goes a step further and says that if you provide a teacher with the

training, the technology, and a conducive learning environment, then he or she should be held accountable for the performance of their students.

The Alabama First Plan is real, comprehensive education reform. It provides the best opportunity yet for us to dramatically improve our schools. The urgency of its passage in the Legislature is critical. Every Alabama citizen should get involved and play a role in the shaping of a better future, not only for our state, but for our children.

As a graduate of Auburn University, I am aware of the dedication to the improvement of the quality of life for all people among the student body. Now is the time to exhibit that dedication by calling your SGA office or the A+ Coalition for Better Education office (1-800-253-8865) to find out how you can get involved. The minds of children are being wasted in this state and it is time to put an end to it!

**Editor's Note:** In an effort to fairly present both sides of the education issue, the *Circle* staff attempted to contact the offices of Score 100, the plan for opportunity-based education, but was unable to reach anyone for comment.







*Untitled*  
India Ink Etching  
Mohammed Dolatobadi



## Cat Feet

Elaine Posanka

I drive faster to get there before it happened.  
Fog curls in headlight beams, ghosts  
that I try to run down.

I know this damp choking fear no self  
defense class can eliminate.  
The grate of soles on cement  
slippery danger in running the touch  
of asphalt  
How scrambling backwards skins hands  
backs of thighs  
The way denim plasters to skin  
wet with fog blood and semen.

I imagine bruises, ringed around thighs,  
blossom in emergency rooms.  
Will they lift his purple fingerprints  
off her body?  
Swabbed combed gravel picked from her back;  
sewn whole again. Proper forms filled  
out, clipboards popping like buttons.

Fog waits on haunches as I park and  
slam the door a sound like a neck snapping back.  
I hurry across parking lots clutching keys,  
and believe at last Dworkin's vengeful heroine:  
"It is necessary for women to kill men."





*Untitled*  
Shawn Mahan



# Christmas in Japan

Thomas Moore

**T**he Christmas of 1993 will linger in my memory for an eternity as one of the greatest experiences of my life. I went to Japan to visit my Japanese friends whom I had met the previous summer here at Auburn when they were studying English.

My family is a close-knit group that my friends have been known to dub as the Cleaver or Brady Bunch family. The holidays are a really special time for us. I had never been away from my family at Christmas time, and so I thought I might miss all of the holiday festivities and Yuletide.

But, after arriving in Narita Airport in Tokyo, Japan, and seeing many of my friends waiting there for me, I knew I had done the right thing. Seeing Takashi Nakamura, Tadashi Nirei, Keiko Nakamura, Tomomi Yamaguchi, and everyone else was like a dream. I could not believe I was really in Tokyo, Japan!

My friends, especially Takashi and Tadashi, are the kind of people that come around only once in a lifetime. They are the kindest and most caring people I have ever met.

This is not to say that my American friends are not good too, but there is just something about Takashi and Tadashi that makes them really special.

My trip was like no other I have ever taken before. We went to all the famous cities: Tokyo, Kyoto, Nara, and Chiba. I saw many historical landmarks and buildings like Tokyo Tower, the Golden and Silver Temples, and the world's largest Buddha. Julianna's Tokyo in Roppongi was the best techno club I had ever been to, making the ones in New York look like Auburn's Ultrabox! I even went to Tokyo's finest spa, where I was able to choose from massages, to a workout with a personal trainer, public bath with specially treated water, or yoga. The food was exotic and it tasted like nothing I had ever had before. Raw crab, fish (sushi), and squid were certainly delicacies I had never had before in America.

But more important than seeing all of these places, I found the most enjoyable times were just being with my friends and their friends and families. Takashi has become my best friend, simply because he cares just as much about me and what I am doing as he does about himself. How many Americans like that do you bump into everyday? Tadashi has a presence about him that makes me feel instantly comfortable. His eyes express a deep interest in what

I am saying, and some of my biggest problems just seem to become nonexistent when he is near.

Even Takashi's parents, Koumei and Takako, and his brother Hajime treated me like I was a member of their family. Hajime's girlfriend, Miki, and Takashi's friend from elementary school, Norihisa, acted as if I was one of their closest childhood friends.

We as Americans hear so much about racial hatred between blacks and whites. Crime has overrun our hometowns and it seems if there is no controlling it. In America, I encounter stereotypes of Asians much too frequently. My American friends have said such ignorant things as "Japanese, Chinese, Korean, they are all the same." That is about as logical as saying Germans, French, and Americans are all the same. Or, I have been asked, "Do you have any fun when you are with them? Don't they just

study all of the time?" My Japanese friends must have invented the word "fun," because I never have a dull moment when I am with them. It is nothing extraor-

inary, just friends being with friends.

There are other cultures out there to explore besides black and white. Our media has done a poor job of showing us what Asians are really like. Imagine the embarrassment I felt when Takashi and Tadashi asked me why Americans typically do not like Japanese, or when they asked me if my friends called them racial slurs like "Economic Animal" or "Yellow Monkey."

Maybe we as individuals can take a strong look at our values and decide what really has gone wrong with our country. From visiting Japan, I have witnessed the power of individual thought and action on society. Japan has one of the world's lowest crime rates. Personal possession of handguns are banned, but it goes much deeper than that. Japanese culture teaches its members to put others first. Think before you speak. Treat everyone you meet with kindness. Fighting is not a solution - it only causes trouble. But, the important thing to remember is they are just like us. They have their good days and their bad. The main difference is how they choose to handle problems when they arise.

One of my favorite quotes is about friendship. It states that friends are your chosen family. Well, I feel extremely fortunate to have Takashi and Tadashi as my chosen family.

**There are other cultures out there to explore besides black and white. Our media has done a poor job of showing us what Asians are really like.**







*Untitled*  
Jennifer Acevedo



# Carrabelle

Scott Nesbitt

**I**t was Sunday morning, close to noon, about the time I ordinarily would have been calling in bets Bruce and Gillette. But not this morning. This morning I was preparing to leave St. Petersburg for good. Bruce and a guy I didn't know had just come by to tell me Gillette had decided not to take any more bets from me. Not that this really surprised me; I figured I was in trouble the night before, when Arizona had the ball inside Southern Cal's five with less than a minute to go. All I needed was a field goal, and they didn't score at all. That killed me. On any other weekend, I would've had Sunday and Monday to make up my losses — Gillette and I always settled up on Tuesday — but now I was about ten thousand bucks in the hole and had less than a hundred to my name, and my choices seemed few.

The other guy — I had never seen him before. He was about six-foot (about two inches or so shorter than Bruce and me) but very stocky. He wore a t-shirt and blue jeans and a tan leather jacket, despite the fact that it was already eighty degrees out. He also wore a matching tan leather cap, which I thought was a little on the cheesy side. Bruce made a sarcastic remark about my apartment — I wasn't much on decorating, and there were a few beer cans lying around on the floor from the night before — and then told me what the situation was. He asked if I had the money. "I'll have it," I said. He said that was good, that they wanted to make sure we had an understanding. I told him that we did.

As they were leaving I said, "Bruce, you don't think you can talk Gillette into letting me have one more game to play around with, do you, just to knock a little off?"

Bruce put his hand on my shoulder, looked around the place. "Lee," he said, "get yourself together. Get your debt paid off, concentrate on being a cook, stay out of trouble."

"Chef," I corrected him. I was a chef at a seafood place called Sand Pebbles, though I'd been out of work for about two months; I'd quit going in when I was on a winning streak during baseball season, when I didn't need the hassle of a job.

"And you really ought to quit drinking," Bruce said, picking up a Busch Light that I hadn't thrown away the night before, after the Arizona game. "It's a nasty habit. Just look at Tony, quit drinking, what, a, year ago?" Tony nodded. "Quit drinking a year ago, joined AA, and now look at him. He's a new man."

"A new man," Tony said, his tan hat nodding up and down a few times.

"Think about it," Bruce said, "and we'll see you Tuesday, Okay?"

"I'll be there," I assured them, and closed the door behind them and leaned against it. "A new man" — that was all that guy said to me the whole time he was there. I wondered if his name was really Tony, and started packing.

I thought about going to the dogs, but decided against it; I didn't want to lose my last hundred dollars, which I'd need for travel money, at the dog track. I never went to the dogs because of the human element. I heard of one dog at the Tampa track that had been winning so much they started giving it some sort of horse depressant, so one night, when he was scheduled to run and the whole Tampa Bay area had bet on him, he came in dead last. I

preferred pro sports, where you could pick your team and feel pretty certain they were going to at least try to win for you. Still, I looked at the dog odds in the sports section, at the betting lines for that day's football games. Gillette had known all week I was planning heavy on the 49ers that night, and now he froze me out. Before, that was the only game of the day that looked real attractive to me. Now they all did.

I threw all my clothes and towels and things into my bed sheets and twisted up a handle, packed up some other odds and ends in a couple of boxes. I packed the stereo and television, glad that I had something worth money. Left the bed and sofa behind. Too big to worry with.

This wasn't the first time this had happened to me. Three years before during basketball season I had hit a dry spell. I was living in Phoenix, where I had moved in with my mother. My father had died when I was a junior in high school, and my mother decided that after I graduated she'd move out west. I went with her to Phoenix, got my own place and a job at a restaurant called Chuck's. Chuck's specialized in steaks, and I got to be pretty good at making them. I met another chef there named Doug Watson who I became friends with, and who introduced me to a bookie named Harper. I had the usual ups and downs to start with, but then during the football season that year I got hot, and by basketball season I had quit going to work and all I did was read the sports pages and watch games and place bets. Then one bad night was followed by another and another, and before I knew what hit me I was about six thousand in debt and had no idea what to do. I talked to my mother, but she was no help — she had very little money and just wanted to lecture me on how stupid it was to gamble. So I did the only thing I could think of to do: I put down as much as Harper would let me — I still remember it, two thousand on Northwestern plus six over Ohio State — and got ready to leave town. I didn't think Harper would be desperate enough to track me down all over the country, and even if he did he probably couldn't find me, but I also knew the longer I stayed in town the more likely it was that something bad might happen to me. So I decided on Florida and took off.

And now here I was again, in the same boat. But this time I had two options I hadn't had in Phoenix. First, I went to see Kevin, another bookie I knew in town. He and his buddies were watching the early games on his big screen TV,

and I asked to speak to him in private. He took me to his bedroom.

"I like the 49ers tonight," I said.

"Yeah?" Kevin said. "That's what you had to tell me in private?" Somebody in the other room cheered for something that happened in the game on TV.

"How much do you want on it?" he asked.

"I could go about eight thousand," I said, figuring if it hit I could stay in town and pay Gillette off enough that he'd let me work something out for the other two.

"No way I can go that high," Kevin said, and then, without hesitating, "I can let you go three. That's the most I can handle right now."

"Man," I said, "I've always been reliable, haven't I? I've never



dogged a debt."

"That's true," Kevin said, "but I've never taken a bet from you that high, either. See, that's the catch. I can't take a bet from somebody I've never taken a bet that high from. Plus, I haven't seen you around in a while. You in some kind of trouble?" I assured him that I wasn't, that I just thought the 49ers tonight were the lock of the year. "There's no such thing as a lock," he told me. I said I knew that. There were mirrors covering Kevin's ceiling and two walls that faced each other — one of them was a giant closet — and a long aquarium ran along another wall. I felt like I was being watched by a hundred Kevins and a million blue and yellow fish, like the Kevins and the blue and yellow fish were closing in on me.

"Tell you what," he said finally. "I'll let you go four. Four on the 49ers, minus eight. How's that?"

"That's great, Kevin," I said. "I really appreciate it." As I left I wondered if he could tell the difference between somebody who's just made a bet because he thinks he's going to win and somebody who's just made a bet because he's ten thousand dollars down. I decided it really didn't matter.

My second option that I had in St. Pete that I didn't have in Phoenix was Melissa. She was a manicurist, and lived in an apartment complex catty-cornered from the one I was living in when I first moved to St. Pete. We had met when we discovered we had been feeding the same stray cat — I was petting it one day in front of my complex, out by the road, and Melissa saw us and stopped and we started to talk. The cat was a skinny little orange thing that would purr and rub against your legs and look up at you and purr some more. I was always a sucker for that kind of thing, and Melissa said she was too, and we got to talking once in a while and eventually we started having each other over for dinner, usually something spicy, which we both liked; she wasn't quite as good at cooking as I was, but she was still good. She had a way of looking at me, kind of out of the corner of her eye, that just killed me; it was a sad look, but you'd have to see her do it a few times before you could pick up on it. She'd do it when I was explaining something that she didn't give a damn about, like football, and it made me think that even though she didn't know what I was talking about, she wanted to hear about it because it was me talking about it. She also had great legs and a very flat stomach that she got from working out four times a week.

I was working at a place called Seashell's at this point, learning to cook seafood, and before long I had moved in

with her — the cat, too, by the way, which we named Liz because it liked to catch lizards and bring them back to the apartment. Things went pretty well for a while. I started cooking down at the restaurant, making more money, and Melissa and I were getting along fine. I wasn't betting much then — I was trying to be good, just a hundred on a game once in a while, maybe three times a week — but pretty soon a bad streak came along. She'd leave her purse lying around and I'd stay up later than her watching TV. I took a five once or twice, once or twice a ten. I started avoiding her, staying out later, making sure she was asleep when I got home. I didn't see I had much choice. Then Bruce dropped by one morning, told her I owed a couple thousand dollars. She was hysterical. Said she'd known I'd been stealing from her all along. I assured her I hadn't been, that I'd just taken a ten once or twice when I needed a six-pack late at night and forgot to pay it back. I told her it wouldn't happen again.

The next few weeks were pretty strained; she said she could never trust me again; said if she ever heard I was gambling again, it'd be over; said she couldn't believe she'd lived with me for a whole year; said I had to learn some responsibility. The next week I lost again — I just *knew* the Cowboys would cover — and when Bruce came over again, that was it. Melissa cried as I moved my stuff out, told me how she thought we had a real good thing, told me how she wished I'd grow up for my own sake. I told her I was sorry and left, found another apartment across town that day, moved in the next.

And now I was back. When I pulled up to Melissa's apartment her door was open. She was talking on the phone in the foyer and wearing an exercise outfit, and when she saw me she kind of froze. By the time I got to the door she had hung up the phone and just stood there, looking at me. It had been more than a year since I'd seen her.

"You look great," I said. I noticed her legs. "Been working out?"

"A little," she said. "That was a friend on the phone. We're just about to go to aerobics class. I'm just getting ready to leave." I heard a meow from the kitchen. I thought, Liz. "How are you?" Melissa asked.

"I'm okay," I said. "How have you been doing?"

"Real good," she said. A cat, a gray one, came out of the kitchen, meowed again. "She's hungry," Melissa said.

"Where's Liz?" I asked.

"Oh," she said, "I had to put her to sleep, about six months ago. She got an infection. Gum disease." She bent down, pet the cat, then looked up at me. "So what's up? This is a major surprise."

"I'm in little bit of trouble," I said. "I owe some money." She stayed down by the cat who was wrapping around her bent legs, purring, once in awhile stopping to consider me. Melissa shook her head, and a sharp burst of air came out of her nose.

"Jesus Christ," she said. "You're still bettin'?" I nodded. "How much do you owe?"

"A bunch," I said.

"A bunch," she said. "And you come here for the first time in a year to ask if you can borrow money from me." She didn't ask this, but rather said it. She stood up, picked up the phone book, which was on the table next to her and the cat, where the phone was. "Jesus Christ," she said again, shaking her head, stretching out the syllables. "You've got a lot of nerve. It's too bad you don't still live here or you could steal it from me."

"Melissa," I said, then stopped. I wanted to tell her how wrong I was to steal from her, and how I knew it was stupid to keep gambling. But all that came out was, "Melissa, this is serious."

"I know it's serious," she said, "but this is your seriousness, not mine. I can't help you."

"Melissa," I said, but she was too quick.

"Listen, Lee. You lived with me for a year. You stole money from me. I'm seeing someone new now and I don't have the money to help you out and I don't think I would even if I could. Now I've got to make a phone call" — she held up the phone book — and I'd appreciate it if you'd just leave. I don't need this." I walked back toward the still-open door, and turned around. She was still standing there, phone book in hand, looking at me.

"Melissa," I said, "I think they might hurt me. I think they might kill me."

The gray cat came over to check me out; I bent down to pet it but it shied away.

"Lee," she said, "you really need to grow up. You needed to grow up last year and you still need to grow up. You think life's just one big game to see how much you can get away with. You think that's what all these other people are for" — she held out the phone book, waving it around this time — "just to be there whenever you need them, to bail you out when you screw them up." She tossed the phone book back onto the table; the gray cat darted away into another room, the room that used to be our living room.

"I don't think that life's a game," I said.

"Well there's something about it you don't get," she said. "You just don't think right." I could hear cars coming and going out of the parking lot. I could hear one of her neighbors watching a game on TV. I looked at my watch and thought, The 49ers game starts in about four hours.

"I don't think that life's a game," I said



again, not really knowing why I said it. "I'll let you get back to whatever you were doing. I'm sorry I bothered you." I started to walk out the door, then remembered it was open when I arrived. "You want this closed?" I asked.

"Yeah," she said. "If somebody comes looking to kill you, I don't want them killing me." I shut the door. I couldn't believe she didn't at least wish me luck, or tell me to be careful, or give me one of her sad looks. Something.

So I hit the road. I had formulated what I thought was a pretty good game plan. I'd drive a few hours out of town and stop somewhere and watch the 49ers game. That way, if they won, I could just turn around and go back to St. Pete, talk to Gillette the next day and work something out; but I wanted to be far enough out of town so if they lost, there would be no chance anybody could find me. Seemed like a reasonable plan to me.

I crossed that long bridge from St. Pete to Tampa, the middle of the three, and I noticed how the bay was filled with sailboats and how it looked like one big picture-postcard, and I thought about what a great time all those people must be having on their boats, and how some of them were probably watching football on little TVs. Just outside of Tampa I filled up the car and got a sandwich from the gas station — leaving me with about eighty bucks — and headed north up I-75. It was almost five now and the game started at eight. The sun was a big drooping ball over my left shoulder. I listened to a game between the Jets and Miami for a while; the Dolphins were staging a dramatic second-half comeback, and I found myself rooting for them to pull it out. They had driven to the New York twenty with about two minutes to go, down by four, and one of the announcers mentioned the point spread. I turned the radio off and drove the rest of the way in silence.

It got dark as I passed by the exit ramps for Ocala, Micanopy, Gainesville. About seven-thirty I got off at the High Springs exit and stated heading west on 98, right about where Florida takes that big left, and just after eight I found a deserted-looking place called the Terminal Bar off to the side of the road. There was something about a mile down the road, but I couldn't tell what; it was tall and looked to be pretty wide, because there was a break in the trees for a while. There were a few bright lights on at the top of the thing, but not many. The lights looked kind of pinkish, maybe purple. If they didn't have the game on in the bar, maybe I could try there.

They did have the game on inside,

though, on a little TV behind the bar, and I found a stool and ordered a beer. There was just three of us in the bar: myself, the bartender — a tall, husky type with a friendly face who looked to be in his thirties — and an Albino, a short, stocky fellow, probably forty or fifty, who sat a few stools down the bar from me, pounding beers and sucking cigarettes whole and cursing at the game on TV. He and the bartender seemed to be buddies — I gathered the Albino spent many nights there. He was going on and on talking about himself; the bartender offered a word or two to him here and there, and occasionally directed a comment my way. I asked if there was any place to get a meal nearby.

"The Last Resort," the bartender said, motioning with his head in the direction of that big thing I'd seen outside.

"What's that?" I asked.

"The Last Resort," he said. "Just about a mile down the road. It's a big ol' resort. They got good food down there."

"Are the rooms expensive?" I asked,

"Or was it always going to be like this— everybody else out trying to change their ways, and me all alone, doing the same old things the same old ways?"

realizing I might be needing a room later.

"Naah," said the bartender. "Don't think so, maybe thirty a night."

"You think they might have any vacancies?" I asked. Both men laughed.

"I'm sure they've got lots of them," the bartender said. "They're killing for business." I nodded and went back to watching the game. It was still in the first quarter and scoreless, and on the next play the 49ers fumbled. The Albino was furious; he banged his fist on the bar. Apparently he had some money on the game, just like me. He cursed at his luck and walked past me to the bathroom. "Poor guy," the bartender said to me, wiping a glass dry. "He can't buy a break."

"Seems like a nice fellow," I said.

"Comes in here every night," the bartender said, "and every night he says it's the last time."

After finishing his business, the Albino purchased a fresh pack of cigarettes from the vending machine next to the bathroom and started heading for his stool, but just about where I was sitting the game caught his attention and he stopped there and watched a play. The 49ers made some other mistake. "Goddammit!" he said, and pounded his fist on the bar. "You believe that?" he asked me, lighting a cigarette. "I could've caught *that* pass."

"I tell you what," I said. "The 49ers aren't looking so hot tonight."

"Smoke?" he asked, holding out his pack of Camels.

"Never touch 'em," I said. I took a sip of my beer and a few drops from the bottom of the bottle dripped onto my thigh.

"You're a smart man," the Albino said. "I've been trying to quit for years. Quit, too, about a hundred times." He stuck out his round pink hand. "Artie," he said, "Artie Churkianian."

"Lee," I said, and I shook his hand. He sat down on the stool next to mine and continued talking.

"One of these days I'll quit for good," he said, tipping his ashes onto the bar, not really very close to the ashtray where he had aimed. "It's one nasty habit, but, man, it's hard to break bad habits, ain't it?"

"Sure is," I said. "It's a hard thing."

"But you've got to try," he said defiantly, and took a long drag on his cigarette. "A man's got to keep trying to improve, got to keep trying to better himself, got to try to change his ways. You can't just stay the same all the time, can you?" Artie had a

thick Southern accent, and I thought how weird it sounded coming from an Albino.

"No," I said. "I guess you can't." The Albino turned his attention to the bartender.

"It's important to grow," he said, "damn important. Am I right, Glen? A man's always got to keep trying to grow, don't he?"

The bartender laughed. "I suppose he does," he said, "but you've been saying that every night as long as I've known you, Art. If it's not one thing you're trying to change, it's another. You're going to lose weight, you're going to quit cussing, you're going to go to church more, you're going to treat your wife better." The bartender seemed to get a kick out of this subject. "What's that thing you're always saying?"

"What thing?" asked the Albino.

"That thing you're always saying about drinking — 'more water, less beer.'" The bartender chuckled. "You've been saying that as long as I've had two legs and a big ol' neck." The bartender turned to me. "More water, less beer," he said. "Art's been saying that for years."

"It's true," the Albino said. "If I could just start drinking more water and less beer I'd start feeling a whole hell of a lot better, I know I would. Better all over. Saw something about it on TV." He took a big gulp of his beer. "But for some reason I just can't seem to make any headway in that department."

"Maybe if you didn't come here every night, that'd be a good place to start," the bartender said.

"Hey, at least I try," the Albino said. "I don't see you trying to better yourself."



What do you do to try to better yourself?" The 49ers, for once, did something right in the game. "All right!" the Albino said.

"As a matter of fact," the bartender said, "I just started working out again. Lost six pounds in two weeks." He patted himself in the gut. "Getting myself into shape."

"Well, that's good," the Albino said. "Everybody's got things they need to change about themselves. What about you, Lee?" he said to me. "What things you trying to improve on?" He put his hand on my shoulder, his pink eyes looking up at me.

"Bring this man another one," I said to the bartender. "It's on me."

"You're a good man," the Albino said, his hand still on my shoulder, and he turned his attention to the TV; the 49ers had just recovered a fumble.

"How 'bout that!" the Albino said, and accepted his beer from the bartender. "Just let me win this game, and I'll quit betting forever!"

The bartender laughed again. "Where've I heard that before, Artie?" he said.

"Say, Friend," the Albino said to me, "why don't you tell this ol' country boy to get off my back? This is what he lives for, to give me hell."

"Well," I said, "I make it a practice to try not to get involved in other people's affairs," and I finished my beer.

"You're a smart man, Lee," the Albino said, "a very smart man. You ought to stick around this town so we could learn a thing or two from you." He noticed my empty. "Bring this man another one," he said to the bartender.

"What town *am* I in, anyway?" I asked. I really didn't know.

"Carrabelle," the Albino said.

"Welcome to Carrabelle," the bartender said, and he set a new beer in front of me. I told him thanks and the three of us sat and watched the game; the 49ers still weren't doing much right. The Albino asked me a bunch of questions: where was I from, where was I headed, who did I like on Monday night. I told them I was moving from south Florida to New Orleans for a new job. They wanted to know what kind of job. "I'm a chef," I said. "Going to work in one of those fancy places on Bourbon Street." They thought that was great, and the Albino asked me about cooking, said it must be great to be able to cook all kinds of stuff. I told them I liked it fine, but that I enjoyed sitting around drinking a few beers and watching sports on TV better. They said they could see the logic in that.

At half-time I told them I'd be right back and went out to my car, leaned against it, looking off at the lights on top of the Last Resort. They kind of bounced and danced,

and finally I noticed they weren't actually bouncing or dancing, but that the tops of the trees were swaying back and forth in front of them. I wondered what I'd do, where I'd go; New Orleans did sound pretty good. I was sure I could find work there. I thought for a second I might drive down to the Last Resort to get a bite to eat, but decided I didn't want to miss any of the game. I'd thought of the phrase "last resort" enough already that day, and here I was, looking at one.

When I went back inside, the second half had already started, and by the fourth quarter it was obvious that I was beat. The 49ers were down by two touchdowns — they weren't going to win the game, much less beat the eight-point spread.

"It's looking bad for you, Art," the bartender said after the 49ers had to punt again. "The 49ers can't do anything to-night."

"It ain't over yet," the Albino said, but he had to know it was.

"How much you got on the game?" I asked.

"Fifty bucks," he said. "They can come back, and when they do, that's it, I'm never betting again."

"Right," the bartender said. "I'll believe that when I see it."

"At least I try," the Albino said, and I excused myself to use the rest room. When I came out they were both engrossed in the game, their backs to me. I stood by the jukebox, read some of the titles. The Albino yelled something at the TV; I turned and saw the 49ers had thrown another interception.

I walked to the bar, paid my tab, left a tip, leaving me with about sixty-five dollars. "Come anytime," the bartender said, "and if New Orleans doesn't work out, I hear they are looking for chefs down at the Last Resort."

Artie laughed. "They're looking for everything down at the Last Resort."

"I may have to look into that," I said, and headed for the door. I heard the bartender kid the Albino one more time.

"More water?" he asked. I didn't hear the Albino's reply.

The hotel was huge, a big pink thing with chipping everywhere. The lights I had seen were on top of the office, which had a big steeple-like roof. There were only a handful of cars in the lot, and two or three campers. Moss hung from the trees and from the steeple and from the two-story complex rooms, which seemed to go on forever. Behind it was the ocean; I had no idea I was that close to the water.

I got a room for nineteen-ninety-five, and decided I'd go to New Orleans the next day and look for work. It had gotten cold during the night, and I went straight into

the bottom-floor room, turned on the heat and got into bed, exhausted; but as exhausted as I was, I couldn't sleep. I thought maybe I'd call my mother from New Orleans, ask her for a little money, just to get started. I thought about Melissa, and how I wished I hadn't gone over there that day. I thought about Kevin and Gillette and Bruce and the guy with the tan leather hat, and how they'd be looking for me all over town next week. I hoped they wouldn't bother Melissa. I thought about how I wished I could place a bet on the Monday night game; the way luck goes, I figured tomorrow night's when I'd hit. I lay exhausted but unable to sleep, my eyes wide open and my brain churning over all these topics, and I thought of the Albino and how hard he seemed to try at this changing thing. I figured his wife was probably some sweet, homely, overweight type who made him hamburger steak and loved him for just who he was, faults and all. I figured she probably wasn't very demanding — after all, she apparently didn't mind his spending night after night at the Terminal Bar — and that it was he who constantly pressured himself to change and improve, not her. And I thought how most everybody I came across was more or less just like the Albino, always into something or other — aerobics, AA, something — trying to, as the Albino put it, change their ways. Was that what was ahead of me? Or was it always going to be like this — everybody else out trying to change their ways, and me all alone, doing the same old things the same old ways? I noticed a spider on the ceiling, working on a web — seemed like a lot of work for not much payoff, a lot of time and effort for something I could wipe away with one quick backhand. I got up and walked to the window. The glass was cold to the touch, with winter encroaching on fall here in this panhandle town. The window faced a large pink pool full of moss. I thought about how cold the water might be, and I wondered how long it would take to get used to it if I jumped right in.







*Untitled*  
Shawn Mahan



## Grandfather Reads From the Roster of Shipwrecks

Jennifer Kroll

"Lady Elgin, the Lakeland, the Sydney McLouth,  
the 'Christmas Tree Ship,' lost in 1912."  
Up here, there is ice and water, sleet and snow.  
Canadian winds raise the gray waves of Michigan  
and smash them against a frozen shore,  
heaping up shelves of rock and ice  
in severed sheets. The flocks of geese  
sweep south, while we remain:  
our stout hearts having learned  
to love a proud gray thing.

Our immigrant ancestors who never saw New York  
journeyed to this place down the St. Lawrence.  
Two hundred and fifty were lost to Lake Erie  
when the G. P. Griffith went down one November.  
Thousands more came to claim the land,  
to coax a living from these gray lakes  
that only grudgingly give forth treasures,  
always taking back a few:  
"Monarch, Milwaukee, Alpena, Algoma.  
We Pray for Vanished Passengers and Crew."



# What Is A Species?

John D. Freeman

**W**hen I was a freshman student (several decades ago), the term "species" was defined as follows: "a category of taxonomic classification, below genus rank, defined by breeding potential or gene flow; interbreeding and gene flow occur among the members of a species but not usually between members of different species." This was clear enough, and the biology teacher went on to point out that a species simply included all those individuals that shared a large number of common traits, were potentially capable of sexual reproduction, and remained genetically isolated from other similar groups. Probably no definition is more anthropocentric and conceptually misleading in biology than the one of "species" given above. As a biologist, I need to know what a species of animal is, but I also need to know the same information for other major kinds of organisms, namely plants, fungi, bacteria, and protists. I believe that it is time to take more of the biological world into account in describing a species rather than basing the concept solely on organisms that reproduce in much the same way that humans do.

Though I learned the textbook definition of "species" in that freshman class, I was skeptical from the first about how accurate the criteria really were. My skepticism originated from a factoid that a high school buddy had shared with me several years earlier when we were discussing possible nicknames for a girl named Margaret who (in our opinion) was particularly unattractive. He had read somewhere that the common dandelion, a ubiquitous weed in all parts of the civilized world, had the **appearance** of being capable of sexual reproduction (e.g., regularly makes flowers with pollen and so forth), but the seeds contained only exact genetic copies of the plant that produced them. The young of dandelions were thus **clones** of parental plants. Since these plants were actually "sexless," we felt that "Dandelion" would make a great name for Margaret. We speculated that she probably also would have to be cloned to ever bear offspring of any sort. Margaret was really a nice person; I'm glad that our idle speculations and rather unkind nickname had no effect upon her social life as she and we did some growing up. Still, I felt deep down that dandelions must be a species, even if they

did not exchange genes among individuals, because I could recognize one when I saw it, and most of them looked pretty much the same. Whether their reproduction was sexual or asexual did not seem to be the most important biological factor in trying to recognize them as a taxonomic group, the species.

In biology, when I was a freshman, all organisms were classified as either Plant or Animal. Instead of just these two Kingdoms, the largest categories into which living things are usually classified, most biologists now recognize five. Some surprising life styles are represented among members of each Kingdom. I remember my astonishment later in my freshman biology class to learn that the bacteria, which were then "Plants" but now are placed in a Kingdom to themselves (the Monera), did not have any sexual reproduction at all. On occasion there may be exchange of small fragments of genetic information between cells, and viruses may regularly move genes about among bacterial cells, but unlike organisms with sexual reproduction they have no regular mechanism of shuffling the genetic deck and dealing out new sets of genes to the next generation. Each bacterial cell has just one chromosome anyway, and new cells arise by a division process (fission) that is rather different from the types of cell division that occur in other Kingdoms. Bacteria, like dandelions, do not reproduce sexually, so it seemed to me that these organisms were **not** species, at least not according to the definition that had been given. Were bacteria really organized into species populations, or was each bacterium to be regarded as its own species because it was reproductively isolated from all the other cells of the same general type?

When I was a junior in college, I heard a depressing story about the doctoral research of a herpetologist who also happened to have the same name as mine. He had studied a group of salamanders for several years but had abandoned the project because he could not find any **males** of that particular species. All known specimens appeared to be females once they reached adulthood! If that were so, where did the new generations of young of this type of salamander come from? Years later, some clarification of the species biology of this kind of salamander was provided. It seems

that the older juveniles first serve as males; as they grow older and larger, they become transformed into females. Transsexual salamanders!!! What kind of a species is that? There was just one kind of animal in this salamander species; its gender depends on how old it is. These animals, like ourselves, are vertebrates, but the population structure in this species certainly did not seem to fit what was expected of a typical sexual species.

The fungi are members of still another Kingdom (the Fungi); these, too, were formerly considered "Plants." At some point in my study of organisms and how they get along, I found that various types of sexual reproduction form the basis of the classification system used for Fungi. The Fungi are very different from **any** type of animal: with the exception of fertilized eggs (zygotes), every nucleus in every fungal cell contains just one set of chromosomes and is therefore haploid. In other words, cells of Fungi that are active metabolically and have to cope with their environment are genetically more like a sperm or egg cell of a typical animal itself is composed. The zygote alone in the fungal life cycle acquires two chromosome sets through gametic fusion and thereby becomes diploid. Rather than taking advantage of the opportunity for genetic dominance and recessiveness to be expressed in cellular descendants, this zygote never divides to make more cells like itself but instead undergoes a type of division (meiosis) that again returns product cells to being haploid. Clearly, in this Kingdom, if we ask the old debate question, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" we have to consider the zygote as the equivalent of the chicken (both diploid) and all other cells in the life cycle as genetic equivalents of an egg or sperm (haploid until fertilized). Perhaps biologically, at least for the Fungi, a "chicken" (the zygote) can be regarded as nothing more than an egg's way of making another egg (typical call), but what do Fungi get out of this?

One of the largest groups of Fungi, however, is a group that consists only of those types among which no reproductive structures have ever been observed, the Fungi Imperfecti. Either these organisms do not reproduce sexually or are discreet enough to do so without anyone ever observing the process. We may ask, "Are



these fungi even organized into **real** species?" More importantly, we must ask how organisms that once may have reproduced sexually could lose that ability and become limited to asexual means. Are such organisms important in the environment we share with them? The genus **Penicilium**, from which the famous antibiotic drug penicillin was derived, is part of this group, and so are many other common molds and decay organisms.

Among a great many members of the Kingdom Protista (mostly unicellular organisms formerly treated as Algae and Protozoa), the sexual life cycle pattern is also one where organisms are mostly haploid and the zygote is the only diploid cell type. Some protists reproduce only by simple cell division and lack sexual reproduction. The examples given above for Monera, Fungi, and Protista Kingdoms lead modern biologists to conclude that sexual reproduction itself probably is much newer phenomenon than the process of speciation. Among higher animals, a premium has been placed upon the genetic condition of diploidism and upon sexual reproduction as a way of ensuring that condition's success; the same is not as true of the other four Kingdoms. If species existed **before** there was sex (and some of these types still exist), how can sexual reproduction serve as **the** criterion that delimits species?

When we consider members of the Plant Kingdom, other failings of the sexual species concept come into focus. For one thing, even those types of plants that do reproduce sexually are often bisexual or bear hermaphroditic flowers. Most plant species, unlike our own animal species, comprise individuals that are all alike, more or less. White oak, corn, okra, tulip, and Japanese honeysuckle are examples of such species; there is no distinction between males and females. This means that one individual may produce both of the gametes (egg and sperm) that unite to start the next plant. If a seed can arise from just one parent even when sexual reproduction is involved, what kind of a species concept would cover this? "Single parenting" has very different meanings for plant and human populations.

Besides bisexuality of individuals and common occurrence of uniparentalism in their reproduction, no plant ever went out looking for a mate. Plants are generally anchored to their environment, except when in the form of seeds or pollen. They have absolutely no means of approaching the ideal situation for sexual species of a sperm having a **random** chance of uniting with any egg. The plants that are always most likely to produce offspring are those **closest** to each other. The greater the distance between any two, the less likely

they are to have their gametes unite. When we think about it, this aspect of sexual reproduction (sometimes referred to as "vicinism") is a factor that plays an important role in the reproductive biology of all sexual species. Simply stated, there are spatial limits to what effectively constitutes a breeding population. We have all heard the expression: "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." A common, somewhat cynical addendum relates to the idea of vicinism: "Yes, **fonder** of someone else nearby."

California redwoods are well known to be some of the world's oldest living things. Since the seeds of these trees germinate and continue to grow mainly in open, sunny places, sexual reproduction enables the species to colonize new areas. A grove that becomes established in hospitable habitat can persist there indefinitely, but seedlings that start within the grove often fail to establish themselves in the shade. New trunks in a closed grove develop by sprouting from the bases of old

### "Transsexual salamanders!!! What kind of species is that?"

growth redwood groves appear to have originated by asexual sprouting, whereas the remainder got their start directly from seeds.

Even longer-lived than redwoods are some of the creosote bushes in western American deserts. These shrubs may gradually spread out by branching underground stems called rhizomes until a tremendous area may eventually be covered by parts of what was once a single plant. The pattern is something like the "fairy rings" of mushrooms (fungi) sometimes observed on the Auburn campus following a rainy period in springtime. Each year the ring gets larger as fungal growth extends further and further into the soil. The age of the clone can be estimated from the size of the ring and data about the annual rate of growth. In the creosote bush, some of the clonal rings are about a mile across, and members of the ring are thousands of years old.

Like the salamanders mentioned earlier, some plants (like desert junipers) can also be transsexual. Most juniper species, on the other hand, are neither transsexual nor bisexual but consist of plants that are either male or female throughout their lives. (Eastern redcedar is really a type of juniper; males of this species cause many of the allergy problems that are erroneously blamed on pines during the early spring in Alabama!) But what if desert juniper is not so weird? Jack-in-the-pulpit is the name of a favorite spring wildflower of woodlands throughout eastern North America. Recent research reported in a

botanical journal indicates that this plant can bear either male flowers or female flowers or both types at the same time. In this case, the type of flowers that a plant bears is more due to environment than heredity. The younger and smaller plants tend to have only male flowers, intermediate-sized plants bear both male and female, and the largest (typically oldest) ones have female flowers alone. Normally, plants get larger each year until they reach their genetic potential, but damage to the leaves that make the food that allows a plant eventually to bear female flowers and fruit—whether due to a storm, or a logging operation, or experimental removal—causes a female of one season to revert to revert to maleness the next. During its lifetime, a Jack-in-the-pulpit can be transformed into a "Jill" and **vice versa** several times. These plants are perennial and have no time limit on their lives anyway. The species is just another that was not previously suspected to be transsexual.

An informed biologist must admit that the phenomenon of cloning accounts for "species" in all of the five Kingdoms. In all but the Monera, sexual reproduction ranges from those that are obligately outbreeding to others that self-fertilize all the time. When organisms themselves are so mixed up about what is proper, **what is a species?**

Many biologists will reluctantly acknowledge that in the natural world there are in fact many **kinds** of species; some facetiously say that a species is what a competent taxonomic authority for that particular group tells you it is. Most biologists realize that the evolutionary success of various groups of organisms is not necessarily a result of their having followed the same reproductive patterns found in the human species. To suggest that redwoods, creosote bushes, and dandelions are less than successful as species would be ludicrous. These include some of the most ancient genetic lines, the oldest individuals, and the most ubiquitous plants that make up the environment in which we live. They are truly on a par with our species, if not ahead of it, in terms of either survival or numbers of individuals. Why should any biologist be so ignorant as to believe that if they could these organisms would aspire to have a reproductive system (i.e., kind of species) more like our own? Why not simply redefine species instead of limiting membership in such a category to those organisms that happen to do things our way?





# Homecoming

Amy Weldon

**H**e walked down the dirt road slowly, moving with a kind of dazed purpose. Dust puffed up reluctantly under his feet, then settled back quickly. He saw no one.

The leaves on the tree limbs drooping over the narrow road had turned gold and green in the afternoon sun. An occasional broken twig dangled from a larger branch like a crippled, accusing finger. He continued down the road without looking up at the trees.

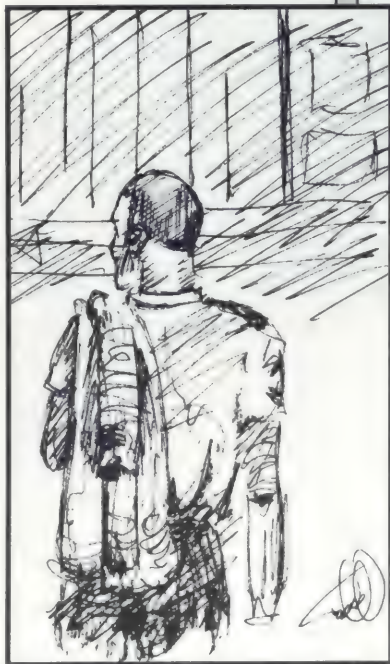
Farther on, the ashes of a campfire lay at the foot of a tall, slender poplar. A set of initials, "J.B.C., U.S.A." and two long, careless slashes had been cut into the trunk of the tree. His eyes flicked to the right at them, then looked forward again.

He trudged on in a vacuum, trying to think of nothing. He was on familiar ground, and he let his feet carry him on, past the old Dudley place, which was now a pile of black, brittle debris. Some faraway part of him began to speak, to scream of the barbecue they had there the summer before he went away with the Troop. He remembered suddenly how he and John Dudley always used to shoot squirrels in the trees that lined the driveway. Now, there were no more squirrels. Only the twin rows of live oaks remained. They framed only a pile of ashes and a black, lonely chimney at the end of a long, rutted path. Against their knotted, dark branches, the tender green of new leaves looked out of place.

His feet rose and fell with tired, military precision. When his foot struck a cartridge shell in the dirt, kicking it away, he did not notice. As he walked on for another mile, plump drops of sweat began to run from underneath his beard. He shook them away absently, as a horse shakes off a fly. His old gray hat was making his head too hot, but he didn't remove it. In four years, it had become a part of him.

An old mongrel dog suddenly came scrambling out of the woods towards him. He stopped, bending slowly and stiffly to pat its head. It leaped around his legs, its tail wagging furiously and its tongue flapping with each jump. He thought

**A gray-haired man appeared, waving a pistol and shouting. He tried to tell his father to stop, stop, that it was him, but nothing came out of his dusty throat.**



**He remembered suddenly how he and John Dudley always used to shoot squirrels in the trees that lined the driveway. Now... they framed only a pile of ashes and a black, lonely chimney...**

then about Spot. Spot used to act like this when he went outside to feed him every morning. They always used to go coon hunting in the fall, and everybody was jealous of the way Spot could tree the fattest coons right away. He loved that old dog.

Abruptly, he stood up and began to walk again. His thoughts drained away as his feet fell back into rhythm. The dog jogged behind him, happy to be following someone again.

The house was there, just as he'd known it would be. He knew it could never have been burned. He began to run faster and faster, his old, dirty uniform streaming raggedly behind him. His thick tin canteen bounced painfully against his bony hip, but he ignored it. One low, strong voice pounded through his mind. He ran up the porch steps as quickly as he could and opened the front door. The knob turned slowly and rustily (*it didn't used to work that way*, something in his mind told him), and then he was staring blindly into the darkened front hall.

Footsteps hurried toward him from the back of the house, running. A gray-haired man appeared, waving a pistol and shouting. He tried to tell his father to stop, stop, that it was **him**, but nothing came out of his dusty throat. *His hair turned gray while I was gone*, he thought dizzily. He was floating, almost in a dream. The edges of his vision began to blur.

The sound of skirts swishing against the floor approached quickly from the back of the house. She was suddenly there, standing beside his father, with his old squirrel rifle in her hand. She stared into his face, then let the gun fall to the floor. "Oh dear God!" he heard her scream, and then her arms were around him. She held onto him so tightly that she could hardly breathe, and he felt her tears drip onto the rough grayish wool of his shoulder. He bent his head and began to shake all over, a low, barely controlled shiver. The four years' worth of his tears came flooding out. "I'm home, I'm home, I'm home," he sobbed. "I'm home, Momma."







*Untitled*  
Shawn Mahan





*Untitled*  
Mohammed Dolatobadi



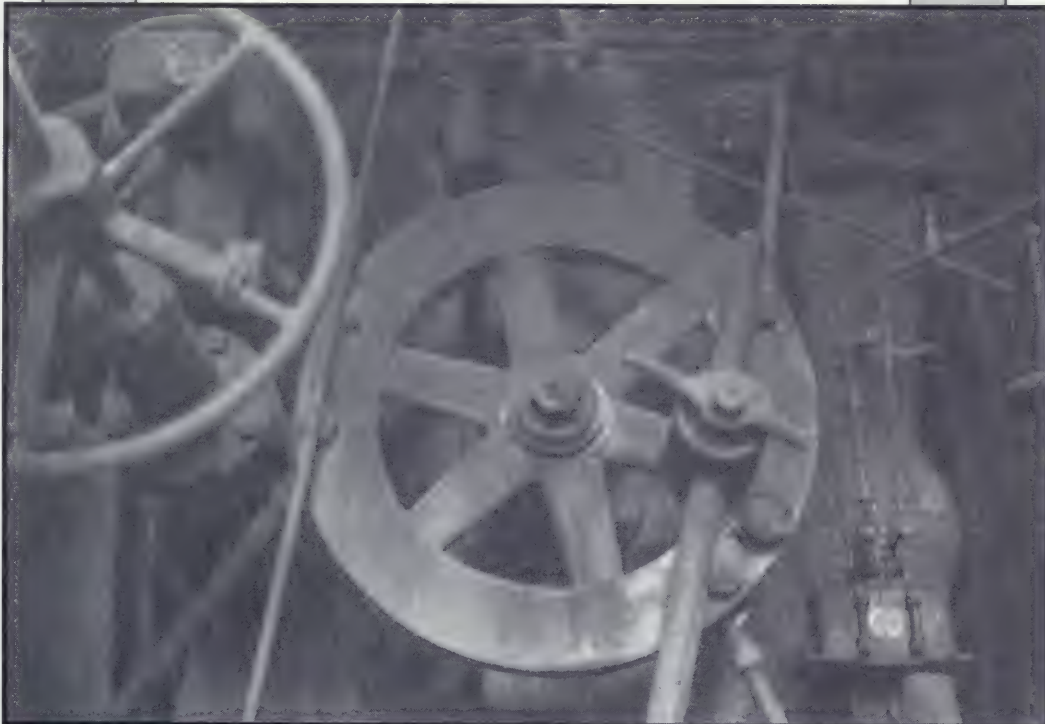
# Cephas

Jeremy Jones

I haven't fished in a while.  
Too much wind, too many waves.  
I miss the pulling fibers of the nets,  
the burning caluses straining,  
sweat and salt and water  
and even sometimes blood  
mixed in the foam around the feet.

"Put out into deep water  
and for a catch let down the nets,"  
he told me. All night the nets stayed empty,  
but he said it and the fish,  
the weight! The boat almost sank  
so I followed and we fished his way  
and I was on the water with him  
and he told us of heaven's net.

Sometimes the nets moan with the burden,  
maybe they want to break,  
to release their load  
and be through with Galilee.  
The salt dries and cracks  
and I don't know the man  
who can ever get it off.



*Untitled*  
Richard Reading



# The Eyes of a Child

Courtney Quinlivan

**M**y friends and I chattered noisily as our neon pink bus trekked through the German countryside. We had been riding for five hours and were anxious to stop and stretch our legs. So far, our European kaleidoscope had taken us to Frankfurt and Heidelberg, and now we were on our way to Munich with a brief visit to Dachau, one of the famous concentration camps of world War II. Presently, we came into the city of Dachau, and I laughed at the Germans wearing their funny little shoes and at all the merchants and their dinky market stands that lined the streets.

We came to a stop at a corner where two of my friends stepped off the bus with a few of our travel companions and told us to have fun at "Dog Chow." They had all decided to skip seeing the camp

- some because they thought they couldn't handle it and others because they didn't want to handle it. I didn't really see what they were scared of. I'd read **Night** and

**Anton the Dove Fancier**, and I'd seen grotesque pictures of impoverished, sickly people being tortured and killed. I knew six million Jews died senselessly. I realized the tragedy. I understood.

Our bus passed through a massive iron gate and stopped next to a white stucco building with a dark roof and tall windows that seemed to resemble a large dining hall. We all stepped off the bus and rounded the corner of the building, and I got my first look at the remains of Dachau. The camp spanned an area so big I couldn't see its edges. The ground was covered in gravel, and the only green was the trees that lined the row where the barracks once stood. Later, I learned that they had been planted by Jewish prisoners as a symbol of life and growth. The two barracks still standing were large gray warehouses, and only by standing on tiptoes could I see through their tiny windows. Indeed, the camp was bare and cold, but I couldn't picture the evil that went on there. I couldn't sympathize; in fact, I couldn't feel any emotion.

Our group stepped inside and joined the already sizable crowd waiting to see the movie being shown about the camp. The doors opened and tourists rushed in and grabbed seats, quickly filling the theater and leaving us to wait another thirty minutes. Instead, we chose to look at the black-and-white photographs that covered the walls of the next room.

I took my time. There were pictures of Adolf Hitler everywhere, making speeches, shaking hands, or giving orders. Then

there were pictures of mounds of dead bodies, naked and hideously thin, thrown aside like garbage. There were pictures of men being tortured, some hanging from trees and others being beaten with clubs. I tried to picture myself there with them. I tried to imagine the millions that that went through this same suffering, the enormity of this genocide. I tried to let these horrid scenes get to me, but I just felt numb.

Then I saw the little boy. His picture hung in a corner, but his eyes found mine from the center of the room. He looked about four or five, just old enough to have a memory. He stood in his school jacket with his dark socks pulled to his knees and his little hat resting on his head. His hands, smaller than my palms, reached

**... the camp was bare and cold,  
but I couldn't picture the evil  
that went on there.**

into the air while his schoolbag hung over his shoulders. Behind him stood a German soldier with the eyes of the devil; his black hair framed a face distorted with hatred, and his hands held a rifle aimed at the child's back. The little boy's eyes drew me closer. I didn't see fear or hate or even sadness in them, yet they told me so much. He didn't know why there was such pandemonium. He didn't know why this day was different from any other. He didn't understand, and I realized that I didn't either. I never could.

Reluctantly, I walked away. I watched the movie with all of its disgusting scenes. I saw the crematorium where human bodies were burned to ashes. I walked through gas chambers where thousands choked to death on poisonous fumes. I stepped inside one of the barracks, where as many as 1,600 people lived at one time. All these horrors I beheld, but all I could see were the eyes of the little boy.

I have carried this child in my mind since that day. Often I think about what happened to him, what suffering he endured, what evil shattered that innocence, what fate he encountered. Other times, I picture him as he should have been, running home from school to his parents or playing happily with other children. Mostly, though, I see him in other people. His innocence is in every child's eyes, and even in most adults'. I see him when I look at myself in the mirror, and each time I learn something new. I hope to visit him again, but with a new understanding of pain and death, of evil and unfairness - of living.







*Untitled*  
Jennifer Acevedo



# Tattoo of Christ

Amy Weldon

One by one, her pores are filled  
with Jesus. Tiny sizzles  
of the needle bloom  
to technicolor lips, to mournful eyes  
of Elvis brown.

The new face itches  
under sweaters, pressed against  
the stiff spine of a pew. He stretches,  
giving gently as she moves.  
In mirrors she can see  
the upturned stare forever toward  
and past her shoulder.

During church she watches  
pale necks under Sunday hats  
and hairspray as they bend  
to whisper during sermons  
and she imagines flesh  
that never tore or soaked  
itself in bloody pilgrim  
rainbows, thorny sacraments  
of color.

## reason stops supporting bliss

Mark Matthews

when i wake  
the first thing i want to do  
is bury the alarm clock  
by the forsyntheias  
out in the yard

she wakes from dreaming,  
already one cosmic error in my favor,  
and recounts curve and sweep of wing  
while circling the earth with angels in increasing orbits  
how her vision stretched as far as hope

(my problem  
is one of faith;  
life is falling away beneath me.)  
so even in heaven one moves in circles.

what's the matter with you?

shovel in hand,  
i want to say i am afraid to share her wonder,  
light, the most perfect thing i know,  
is bending all around us.





*Malocchio*  
Anne McCoy Estes



## Contributors

**Jennifer Acevedo** is a graduate student in political science.

**Gretchen Eckroate** is a senior in English. She can write real good.

**Anne M. Estes** is a pseudocultural biologist dedicated to the preservation of fossilized microscopic plants and glam rock. She believes in the power of bubble soap.

**Liz Humphrey** is a 1993 graduate of Auburn University. She plans to attend law school this fall and is currently working for A+, the Coalition for Better Education.

**Jeremy Jones** is a senior English major from Atlanta. He plans to move to Colorado and raise buffalo after graduation.

**Jennifer Kroll**, a Ph.D candidate at Auburn, is originally from Wisconsin. She received a B. A. from the University of Notre Dame and an M. A. from Boston College, and she is enjoying her first winter in the South.

**Shawn Mahan** is a sophomore in aerospace engineering.

**Mark Matthews** is originally from Syracuse, NY. He attended Ithaca College, where he majored in English and writing, and is currently pursuing a master's degree in education at Auburn. He enjoys sailing and hangliding.

**Thomas Moore** is a junior in journalism who plans to attend school in Japan next fall.

**Scott Nesbitt** graduated from Auburn in 1986 and has returned to pursue a second degree in English.

**Karen Parr**, ex-Tempo editor of the Auburn Plainsman, is currently in New York City.

**Elaine Posanka** is completing her master's thesis in poetry at Auburn. She is originally from New York but has decided she likes the South...if not Alabama specifically.

**Zoe Press** is a deeply confused person whose erratic parents named her after the neighborhood exotic dancer. She feels a special affiliation with Hawaiian birds. She is a fanatical feminist and her favorite book is **The Little Prince**.

**Courtney Quinlivan** is a freshman in architecture.

**Richard Reading** is a native of Tennessee but now calls Auburn home since he has been here so long. He is a graduate student in community planning who sees the world through a camera lens.

**Amy Weldon**, a sophomore in English and journalism, will soon begin her term as the next editor of the **Circle**. She admires James Dickey, Flannery O'Connor, and MoonDog.



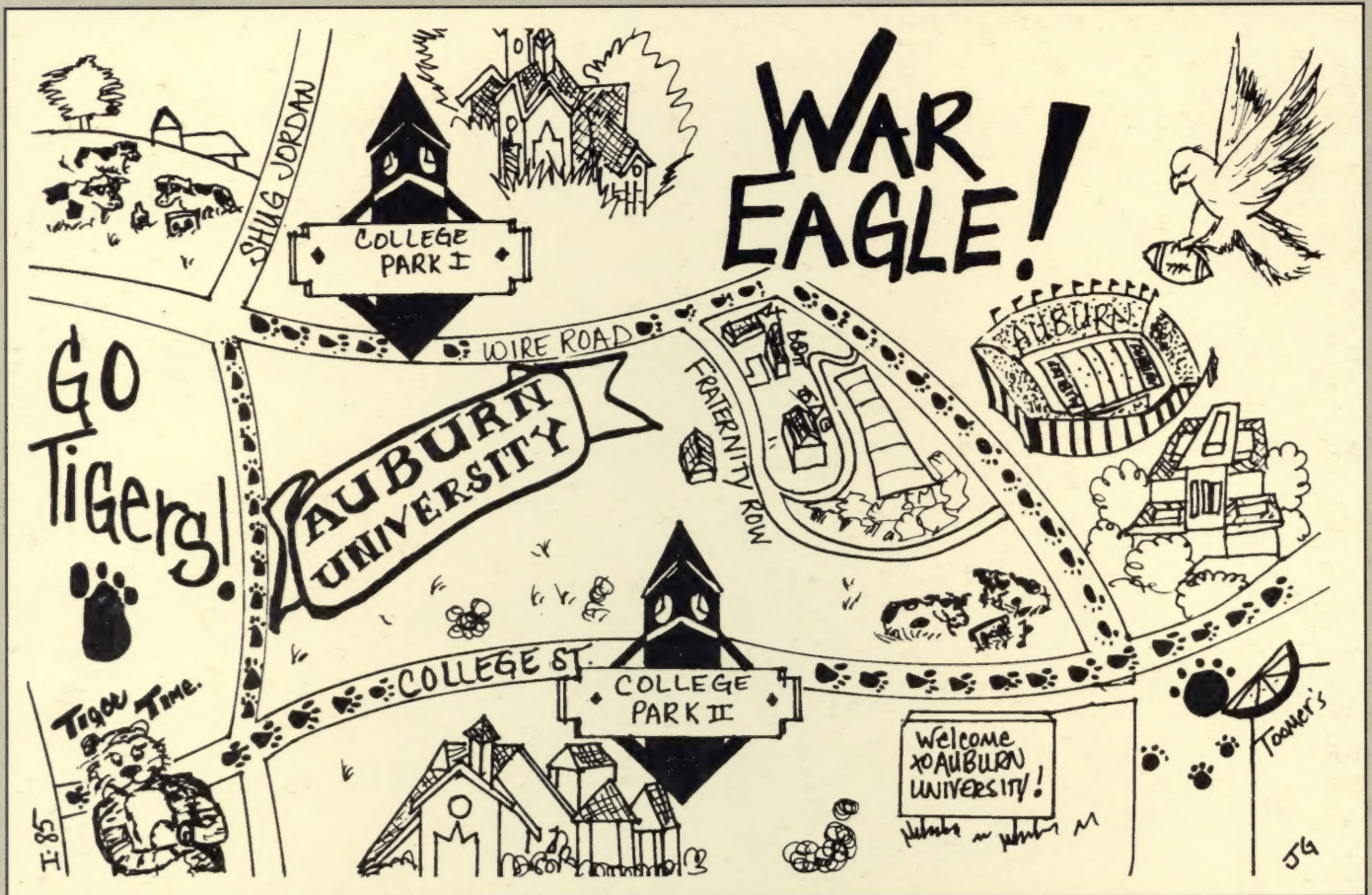
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